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Good Counsell

AND

ADVICE

TO ALL THE

Friends of Truth,

To be Read throughout all their Families, by them whom the Lord hath Called, and is Calling into his everlasting Covenant.

Written from *Amsterdam* by *William Ames*.

LONDON,
Printed for *Thomas Simmons*, at the sign of the *Bull* and mouth near *Aldersgate*, 1661.

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Friends, the Lord hath put it into my heart to write unto you concerning those things which are most needful to be witnessed by you, and brought forth in you, and amongst you.

MY Brethren, Sisters and Friends, the Almighty God hath visited you in his everlasting love, and in a time in which you were without the true peace did the Lord reach unto you, and called you into the way where peace is found; Then did the Lord touch your hearts, and begot in you a Hunger, Thirst and breathing after himself, and he opened the way unto you, which before you knew not, wherein you might find rest and be satisfied; and the Almighty hath shined amongst you, and the brightness of his rising did break forth in you, by which your hearts were enlightned that you have seen and comprehended all the worlds waies, in which you also did walk; And the Lord hath watched over you for good, even unto this day he hath preserved you in many difficulties and dangers which appeared against you, he rebuked the proud for your sakes, and the Mighty who contemned you brought he into contempt, he preserved you in the midest of the fiery rage of men, and hath not suffered the flame to hurt you, Salvation hath been your defence round about, and life did spring up within you, the vertue of the Almighty attended you, that you might feed upon it, that the Immortal vertue might be your daily bread, the power of his Arm reached unto you to bear you in the way that you should walk, that there-

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by your hearts might be purged from all uncleanneſſe, that you might have fellowſhip with your God.

The glory of his power broke forth in you, which gave you courage and dominion, the eternal inheritance was opened unto you to draw your affections thither, that your portion might be with your God, and that he might be your lot for ever, that your minds might be redeemed from the Earth, and your affections from things that periſh, that you might know your life to be in God, and your ſtrength to be the power of his Arm, that the light of his countenance might be your delight, and the brightneſs of his glory your joy, that his Righteouſneſs might be your covering, and his wiſdome a fountain within you, that in his counſel you might dwell to praiſe his name for ever.

You dear Children whoſe rejoycing is in the Lord, who dwell in his power and his eternal Counſel and wiſdome, your dwelling is glorious, you ſeek not the favour of men, neither do you ſeek to be eſteemed by men above others, but your peace is to know that you are eſteemed by the Lord; you are poor, but the Lord is to you riches, you are weak, but the Lord is ſtrength unto you, your delight is not to flouriſh in knowledge, therein to appear before men, to gain a great name, and to be looked upon to be the greateſt, but your delight is to know the Tree of life flouriſhing in you, and you love not your lives unto death for the love of God who hath called you, and you are content to be eſteemed fools, and do not ſeek by the wiſdome of words in the exalted knowledge, or any diſobedience to fly the reproach of men.

You delight in the leaſt appearance of God in any, and

and you diſpiſe it not, becauſe they in whom it appears are not ſo wiſe as you, you look not upon the poor with diſdain, but the love of God flows from you to the needy, you delight to deal your bread to the hungry that they alſo might be partakers of your refreſhments, and the poor in ſpirit you cheriſh with delight, becauſe you judge not with reſpect of perſons, for the ſpirit of true Judgment is within you.

You are not offended when another is eſteemed above you, neither for that cauſe (nor any other) doth evil lodge in your hearts; you ſtrive not to rule over others, but you rejoyce to be ruled by the Lord, whoſe power is in your inward parts, and the glory of his riſing is the light in which you walk, your day ſhall never be darkned, neither ſhall the night overtake you who keep the word of life, the proud ſhall not proſper in their way, neither ſhall the mighty prevail againſt you, your way hath the Almighty Eſtabliſhed, and his eternal and out-ſtretched Arm ſhall guide you therein, and therewith will he overcome your enemies whenſoever they ſhall riſe againſt you, that his Name might be glorious amongſt the Heathen, and that his renown might ſpread to the ends of the Earth, and that you might dwell with him for ever in the Kingdome prepared for you.

Therefore you that have a quick and a large comprehenſion, take heed that when your underſtandings are opened and knowledge increaſeth, that that part which delighteth in knowledge without the power of God get not up to live in exaltation there, for in that ſtate you deceive your own Souls which ſhould be nouriſhed by the Power and Preſence of God.

And although you ſhine in appearance as Stars of Heaven in that ſtate, yet (you being without the power of God by which you ſhould be kept) there hath the Dragon power over you, and he will bring you down to the Earth in the day of tryal; for many aſpire thither, and though they have a zeal for God, yet they themſelves being exalted in knowledge above the power and wiſdome of God, they are without the true feeling fellowſhip or diſcerning; And thus many times they diſdain the appearance of God in others, who are meek and poor, and appear not in that excellency of wiſdome and knowledge (in the thoughts of the conceited wiſe) as they do, and to ſuch ſpirits the Declaration of truth by our dear Brethren declared (though in the power and wiſdom of God) becomes as an old thing, if it appear not in that excellency of the wiſdome of words, which may ſuite with their ſpirits, and ſo that by which the poor and the meek who truly fear God are refreſhed, is to them a loathing, becauſe of their fulneſs, of which they ought to be empty, and by ſuch ſpirits my dear Brethren do often ſuffer by back-bitings and ſecret reproaches, beſides the burden of that Spirit it ſelf.

And although ſuch in the general may have in their underſtandings how God ought to be worſhipped, and what is his way and in that knowledge be exalted, yet the ſecrets of the Lord they know not, neither is his Counſel the place of their dwelling; and although they may have a zeal for the Lord and his way, yet they themſelves are out of it, and being without the power of God, they cannot overcome their luſts, and this is the cauſe that many times through the evil practiſes of ſome, the way of truth

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is evil ſpoken of, and although they have a form of Godlineſs, yet are their hearts unſanctified; therefore watch all that you be not overcome.

I ſay unto you all watch that you may not be overcome, and when you feel any thing riſing in you againſt another, becauſe (as you think) he doth not reſpect you as he ought to do, take heed that that prevail not over you, for if it do, then from thence as a ſtream will evil thoughts, prejudice, and bad ſurmiſings againſt others flow forth, untill you are conſumed in it; Therefore be ſure to watch againſt that part in you, which would riſe up in prejudice and evil thoughts, that the ſimplicity of the Goſpel might abound in you, in that, in meekneſs and long-ſuffering to bear, that they who walk otherwiſe might be aſhamed.

For many there are who ſurmiſe evil, and conceive prejudice in their hearts againſt others without a cauſe, and this is a curſed thing; therefore every one watch that your hearts may be kept from being overcome with it.

And you that have attained to a meaſure of ſtability, let the wiſdome of the Almighty be your guide, that you might cheriſh the fainting and help the needy, encourage the tender and them that are weak, let your tenderneſs in ſtaidneſs, wiſdome and gravity appear unto them, for a friendly behaviour cheriſheth the ſimple, comforteth the weak and encourageth them who are of a fainting heart, when a ſtrange and ſtern carriage may diſcourage, oppreſs, and in ſome beget prejudice.

But have not familiarity without the wiſdome of God, as many have to the giving liberty to vanity, or to the letting up of a light ſpirit in any, or to the let-

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ting in of an unclean ſpirit over you, either ſo to become your burden, or otherwiſe to captivate your hearts into evil, as it hath been with many, who for want of the watch to the light to be guided by the true wiſdome, have been familier with unclean ſpirits, and have been defiled with them; but be ye patterns of Righteouſneſs, Holineſs and Purity by your wiſe walking in the fear of God in all your converſation.

And walk in love towards all men, in wiſdom and fear, and towards them who have received the Teſtimony of truth, let the manifeſtation of your love be ſuch, that nothing in them thereby may be raiſed up to expect that from you, which you intend not towards them, which they ought not to except from you; for thus many have been ſnared and have fallen, that when love in familiarity hath been manifeſted to them, the contrary part in them, thereby hath taken occaſion to look out after, and to except that which was not intended towards them; So the wrong deſires and expectations being raiſed, becomes a ſnare to the Soul; Therefore in the true fear, wiſdome and diſcerning, let your love be manifeſted, that all occaſions of evil may be avoided.

And when any of you feel any thing riſing in you, that is diſcontented at any time, becauſe another (as you may think) is eſteemed above you; watch againſt that, for that is *Cains* nature by which the world is guided, who ſeek every one to be greateſt, and if that get Dominion in your hearts, then envy and emulation which proceedeth thereout, will lodg within you, and that will break your unity with God and his people, and cauſe ſwift deſtruction to come upon you; Therefore watch that through the

power of Gods Spirit working in you, that nature may be utterly destroyed and rooted out, that you may be content to be esteemed the least, and whatever man esteemes you to be, (whatever man he may be) your peace may abide in this, that you know that you are esteemed by the Lord.

And when any of you feel any thing that desireth fleshly liberty, keep that down, and let the fear of God possesse your hearts, for if that be given way unto in one thing, it thereby recovereth strength to prevail over you, to lead you to another, and this it will do untill it hath estranged you from Gods Spirit, and have made you to be as other men, Children of wrath and condemnation; Therefore in the light watch against it, and give no liberty to the lust of the flesh, but let that be (through Gods spirit) crucified in you that your liberty may stand in the eternal Kingdom of God.

And if there be any thing in you that longeth for revenge, or the destruction of them that have harmed you, that proceeds from the evil root, and you are not to be of that Spirit, and if that prevail over you, it will destroy your peace with God, and break your unity with his people; And although you may deny to act outwardly against your enemies, yet if such a Spirit hath place in you which do desire the destruction of their persons, that will become a snare unto your souls, except in the Light and power of God you wait, that thereby it might be overcome, that you may truly know what it is (and also do it) to love your enemies, to blesse them that curse you, and to pray for them that dispitefully use you; And in so doing you will heap coals of fire upon their heads, and approve your selves the Children of God, and

abide in peace with him, and in the time of tryal you wil posſeſs your ſouls in patience; but if the other ſpirit hath dominion over you, when your enemies increaſe, you will fret your ſelves and be impatient, in deſiring their deſtruction, you will deſtroy your own peace, and the Lord will not regard you.

And all friends take heed that you are not filled with the cares of this life, to gather together worldly goods to provide for the time to come, leaſt your hearts are taken up with it, and you be overcome with Covetouſneſs, and ſo forget the living God, that Created Heaven and Earth, and the treaſure of this World become your God; but wait in the light that your hearts may be kept out of evil to worſhip God in Spirit, caſting all your care upon him, having found his Kingdom and Righteouſneſs; Yet to be diligent every one in his place and calling in the true fear of God, that you may be a holy people peculiar unto God, and ordering the Creation in his fear and wiſdome, to his glory every one in his place; But make not the corruptable things your Treaſure.

And you that are Parents of Children, let not your minds run into the Earth, there to ſtrive to heap up, that you may get portions for your Children, but let the fear of God poſſeſſe your hearts, and then with content you will indeed know, that God careth for all his Children, who truſt in him, and not in uncertain riches, and ſtand ſingle in the Counſel of God, that you may know his will, him in all things to obey, caſting your whole care upon him, that you fall not into the ſnare of the Devil; for he that ſtriveth to heap up the Treaſure of this life, runneth into a ſnare and will fall into a pit; Therefore wait that in all things whatever it be, you may be governed by

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the Spirit, and in the wisdome and Counsel of God, that your peace may flow as a River.

And you that feel the assaults of the enemie, seeking to prevail over you, take heed and in the Light watch, that that nature get not up to prevail over you, which will dispair of the victory, for if it do, that will cause you to yield unto him; But in the fear of God dwell low in patience, believing in the light that God will preserve you, and there he will give you power against that dispairing nature and all the powers of death; And this faith is only in the light, in which in patience wait (through true obedience) for the power of God to give you the victory.

And you that see the Crosse and are affraid of it, whilest you are looking out, your Condition is miserable, and fear will be the snare of your souls because you have regard in your hearts unto that which you must loose; Therefore turn your eys to the Lord, that in the leadings of his Light you may freely give up that which is to be crucified, and then your fears will cease, and your strength in God will abound.

And take heed you that are wise, that high thoughts of your selves prevail not over you, for that ought not to be, for that will lead you into self-exaltation, to think your selves to be wise when indeed you are without the true wisdome, and then there will be more hope of a fool then of you, if that should prevail over you; Therefore let the fear of God possesse your hearts, that self may be kept in no reputation, that the Lord may be exalted in you, that so you may dwell in peace, for a servant of the Lord must not exalt himself, but keep low, that the true God may be exalted, for whatever he hath which is good it comes from the Lord; Therefore not unto us, but

unto his Name be the praiſe for ever.

And you who are called to ſuffer for the Teſtimony of Jeſus, let your dwelling be in the Power, Wiſdom and Counſel of God, that your deſires prevail not over you, and cauſe you to bow for your liberty, or at leaſt take away your peace in your bonds; for when you are bound, if you deſire liberty, your dedeſires working in you make your bonds grievous, for where deſires have liberty, and are not ſatisfied, that is a ſtate of grievous bondage; But if you are bound and deſire not your liberty, but are given up in the will of God, your bonds are not grievous, but you are in the glorious freedom of the Lord; Therefore watch againſt your deſires, and in ſtead of deſiring liberty, by the Spirit of God wait in the Croſſe, that thoſe deſires which would captivate might be deſtroyed, then ſhall your liberty be glorious, though you are outwardly in bonds, then you will not be haſty for your deliverance, but will be willing to wait the Lords time, in patience and with rejoycing.

And my dear Friends, let your bodies and all that you have be given up a Sacrifice unto God, that in the time of tryal you may approve your ſelves to be the peculiar people of God, being willing to deny your ſelves, and all outward injoyments for the name of God, and ſuch a people God will Crown with eternal life; Therefore my dear Friends, let none have occaſion to ſay, that for the love of your goods, your liberty or your lives, any of you have forſaken the way of truth, which the Lord hath called you to, for it is through ſufferings that the God of Heaven this day will glorifie his people; Therefore fear not the rage of man, neither be ye diſmayed becauſe of the

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Mighty flood, for the Lord God who loveth his people with an everlasting love, hath set the bounds thereof, and for tryal it is (that they that are approved may appear) and not for the destruction of his people; Therefore fear not, but be valiant for the truth of our God.

And take heed that when at any time you have outwardly suffered loss for truths sake, that not any of your minds be drawn out to expect an outward recompence, but rather to rejoyce that you are accounted worthy to suffer for the Lords sake, then you shall have your reward, which is eternal life; for many when they suffer murmur at their outward losses, and have an eye out after an outward recompence, which if they obtain according to their desire, verily they have their reward, but if they obtain not, they are offended, and stumble and reproach them from whom they did expect it, and so they become a burden to the Lords people, and a dishonour to truth; But learn every one in all Conditions without murmuring to be content, and whatsoever you do, or whatever you suffer let it be singly unto the Lord.

And you that have this worlds goods, set not your hearts upon it, to bind up the bowels of your love, from them who are in want, for if you do your treasure will be the snare of your souls, and the Lord will not hold you guiltless.

And you that are outwardly poor, let not your minds run out after relief from others to depend there upon, and so neglect your own diligence, as many have done, for that mind prevailing in you, if it be not satisfied it will break forth into emnity, but let the fear of God possess your hearts, that you may keep the truth in humility, meekness and contented-

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neſs to walk, and your tryal will not be beyond your ability, and herein (though to you is diſtributed of the temporal things according to your need, yet) you will not be burdenſome to Gods people, for it is the deſiring and the craving ſpirit after thoſe things which is a burden to the juſt.

And all friends take heed that that ſpirit prevail not in any of you which will lead you to watch for evil with an evil eye, and although the good appears it regardeth it not, but watches for the evil, thereby to take an advantage, this will beget ſtrif and emulation; But my Friends where any thing of Good appears in any, although there may be yet much of evil, yet let your tenderneſs, patience, meekneſs and love be exercifed towards ſuch in the wiſdome of God, that the good which appears may be cheriſhed, that you might be Inſtruments of Salvation unto them.

And whenſoever you are called to ſuffer for the Lords Teſtimony, take heed that the haſty fiery ſpirit in a fiery zeal be not exalted in you, for that will endure but for a ſeaſon, but keep low to feel and enjoy the meek quiet ſuffering and patient ſpirit of the Lamb, to bear you through, and therein you will have peace in your ſufferings, and in the end obtain the victory.

And the eternal God will eſtabliſh your goings, and Crown you with honour, glory and everlaſting dominion above all the families of the Earth.

I am your Brother in the fellowſhip of the Eternal Goſpel.

W. A.